

Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable Update

Race and social justice was one of the five focus areas at the Kids and Families Congress. The Race and Social Justice (RSJ) Community Roundtable, a broad coalition of community based organizations and institutions, has agreed to serve as the Youth and Families Initiative action team on those issues. The Roundtable had previously identified many of the same areas identified by delegates at the Kids and Families Congress. In this email, we provide details about the Roundtable and the work they are doing for youth, families and racial equity.

In 2009 the City convened the Roundtable as a forum for community leadership on racial justice. The group is made up of 25 key organizations and institutions, including representatives from community based organizations such as the Arab American Community Coalition, NAACP and El Centro De La Raza, as well as larger institutions such as King County, the Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle Public Schools.

The RSJ Community Roundtable has the vision of eliminating racial inequity; the Roundtable is doing this by eliminating institutional racism within their own organizations and working together across organizations and with the community to eliminate structural racism. The Roundtable is leading with racial equity in education, while also recognizing the connections between education and criminal justice, economics, environmental justice and health. The Roundtable is working toward real change that will result in tangible community benefits.

In order to eliminate racial inequity in the education system, the Roundtable has prioritized the following:

- Incorporate a racial equity analysis into their own organizations' budget, policy and program decisions.
- Address race-based inequities in Seattle/King County high school graduation rates.
- Address racial inequity in school discipline rates.
- Promote a state-wide legislative strategy for racial equity in education.
- Integrate racial equity into other YFI priority areas. By analyzing the work of YFI with a racial equity lens, the RSJ Roundtable will help ensure that equity remains at the forefront of YFI's accomplishments.

"The significance of the Roundtable is the members' shared vision and their commitment to collaboration," says Glenn Harris, RSJ manager for the City of Seattle. "Institutional racism creates disparities across the board. The Roundtable, organizing with the Youth and Families Initiative, will create greater collective impact than working within individual organizations or on separate issues. By joining forces, we can create real change."

The Roundtable is planning a community forum in 2011 that shares and collects feedback on its work and offers opportunities for other community members to engage. For more information on the RSJ Community Roundtable, contact Scott Winn at 206-684-4541 or scott.winn@seattle.gov.